

## **4. Project Benefits and Compatibility**

### **a. Community Benefits**

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As a long-standing corporate citizen of communities throughout the United States and abroad over the past twenty years, The GEO Group, Inc. (GEO) is excited with the opportunity to extend our partnering relationships with the citizens, businesses and community leaders, of Charlotte County and/or the Mount Rogers area. In this section, we provide an overview of the Charlotte County community where we are proposing a facility and have a long-standing relationship with the local officials. However, we foresee similar benefits for the Mount Rogers area and plan to approach the project in the same manner as presented here.

Charlotte County is located in south-central Virginia. The Roanoke/Staunton River and Buggs Island Lake form the county's southwestern boundary. With its population of 12,472, Charlotte County enjoys a population density of 25 persons per square mile, as opposed to the state's average of 56 persons per square mile. The area is known for its strong agricultural heritage and its rich forest resources. The county is located 90 miles southwest of Richmond, the state capital; 192 miles southwest of Washington, D.C.; and 98 miles northeast of Raleigh, N.C.

This rural county relies upon tobacco, textile and timber production as its primary economic base. Charlotte County is the 9<sup>th</sup> poorest in the Commonwealth, with statistics indicating that 20% of its population lives in poverty. The family median income is \$26,029, which is less than one-half of the state's average of \$57,050 (Virginia Statistical Abstract, 2000).

The county's largest employer, Westpoint Stevens, is located in the town of Drakes Branch. This terry cloth manufacturing facility employs 520. With the downturn of the economy and the major threat posed to all US textile plants, Charlotte County officials worry about the future of this facility and the town in which it is located.

The proposed correctional center will bring many benefits to the community. The new construction will bring construction jobs to both the County and the Commonwealth. The estimated labor, benefits and taxes for the annual operation of the facility once completed, could be as much as \$10.5 million. The estimated purchasing of goods and services from local sources would be as much as \$2.5 million. The anticipated annual contributions to local charities and schools would be as much as \$20,000. These estimates are based on our experience at Winton, North Carolina and Lawrenceville, Virginia. A proposed staffing plan as well as examples of our community involvement and the economic impact our facilities have on local economies are provided at the end of this section as attachments.

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GLOBAL EXPERTISE IN OUTSOURCING

GEO owns property in and just outside of the Town of Drakes Branch. If GEO were to locate a prison on this property, it would offer a boost to this town's economy at a time when it is severely in need. For its employment base, GEO would draw from the estimated 100 or more correctional officers currently living in Charlotte County but working in facilities located in other areas of the region, including the Lunenburg, Nottoway, Buckingham and Brunswick facilities.

Charlotte County's unemployment rate in the past year has fluctuated between 4.3% and 8.5% due in part to the agricultural based economy. The total number of full time employees that will be required to operate the completed facility is approximately 307.

GEO understands the importance of community relations and demonstrates our commitment on a daily basis in all of our operations. Our reputation has been built on a foundation of our work in local communities in cooperation with our client agencies.

### **LOCAL RECRUITMENT**

GEO's well-being as a company equates with the well-being of its staff. Like all corrections operations, GEO's major yearly expense is in its investment in employees: salaries, training, recruiting and benefits. It is of primary importance to GEO to be able to recruit the finest staff available at the start-up and throughout the term of operations and that our staff be highly motivated to stay with GEO once they are screened, hired and trained. The motivation to grow as an employee of GEO comes from the equitably enforced high standards of professionalism, the opportunity for advancement through the recognition of excellence in performance and the fair treatment of employees through the benefits package.

GEO stands by its pledge to hire locally as we always do and will be a good corporate neighbor, as we have been in the communities in which we have operated for the past twenty years.

### **MUTUAL AID / COMMUNITY INTERACTION**

The primary responsibility of GEO is to maintain the custody and control of inmates committed to its institutions, thus providing for the safety of the public in surrounding communities. Further, it is our responsibility to ensure the safety and welfare of each staff member and inmate within the institution. The ability of an institution to maintain control during a crisis or emergency situation is at all times essential. Therefore, working with local, county, state and federal law enforcement, corrections and emergency agencies are an integral part of the daily operations of the institution.

Each of our 40 operating facilities (domestic and international) has emergency procedures in place and we consider all agencies our partners in the development and testing of our procedures. We have had excellent success in our established partnerships with communities, local, state and federal law enforcement, and our client agencies in mutual assistance during situations requiring our "criminal justice team" to meet the challenges at hand.

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GLOBAL EXPERTISE IN OUTSOURCING

As is true in many of GEO's contracts with local governmental agencies, we would expect the Charlotte County Sheriff and the Sheriff's staff to play an active role in the services being

provided by GEO. In the event GEO is successful in this procurement process, we would immediately meet with the Sheriff to begin our partnership with the County to ensure a smooth transition and operation of the facility.

GEO enjoys excellent relationships with all levels of law enforcement throughout the country. We would be pleased for the Commonwealth and VDOC to make contact with any of our law enforcement public partners as outlined in the Law Enforcement Relationships Summary included at the end of this section of our proposal.

### **b. Local Support/Opposition**

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The potential of locating a prison in the county is overwhelmingly supported by the members of the Charlotte County Board of Supervisors and the Town Council of Drakes Branch. Local business leaders support the concept and the Southside Virginia Community College, located ten minutes from the site stands ready to offer support and training at all levels.

### **c. Public Relations Strategy**

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Positive relations between the institution and the community in which it is located are essential. Administrators and management staff will be charged with the responsibility of fostering and maintaining good relations within the community. A Community Relations Board will be established wherein community leaders such as religious leaders, social agency personnel, business and governmental leaders will be invited to meet on a regular basis with institution management in order to provide insight into the needs and concerns of the community. We believe GEO will bring a very necessary economic boost to Charlotte County.

GEO has always placed an emphasis on hiring almost all of the staff from the local area. We believe, at present, that in excess of 96% of our facility staff reside in the local area of the GEO institution at which they work. In order to better assure local hiring when there are numerous applicants from outside areas, additional points are given to local residents. Our philosophy is to become a vital part of the community as a new business enterprise with the opportunity to provide new jobs, professional training and job development, purchase goods and services locally and to support the needs of Charlotte County and the surrounding communities.

Many of our facilities have active community projects including scholarship funds for high school students, job interns with high school students working in the administrative areas, donation to boys and girls shelters/schools and toy drives at Christmas. With employees at GEO coming from the local area, the effect is mutually beneficial: GEO benefits by having an esprit

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GLOBAL EXPERTISE IN OUTSOURCING

de corps and a sense of contribution, while the community benefits through the development of its citizenry and the diversification of the business economy.

Early into the activation phase of the institution, GEO will host both a vendor fair and at least one job fair in Charlotte County, in cooperation with the local community. Corporate staff and specialty staff from other GEO facilities (health services, financial, personnel, security /operations to name a few) will be at the job fair to collect applications and conduct initial job interviews. Follow-up interviews will be conducted if necessary, along with background checks for those selected.

#### **d. Compatibility with Local Economic Development**

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The opening of GEO's Rivers Correctional Institution (RCI) located in Winton, North Carolina, brought additional value to the community because we hired staff from the local community. GEO opened RCI under a contract with the Bureau of Prisons to house Washington D.C. sentenced inmates. The facility was opened in 12 months and 75% of the staff were hired from the County. As many as 91% of the staff were hired within a 40 mile radius of the facility. The facility employs 440 staff members and 70% are minority employees.

GEO also did a seamless transition of the Lawrenceville Correctional Center on March 23, 2003. GEO transitioned 304 staff to the payroll in less than fifty six hours. Lawrenceville provides another example of working with the community in a challenging transition. The community participates in an advisory role, a management team was hired from the local community and there continues to be an excellent working relationship with the community. Our philosophy is to become a vital part of the community as a new business enterprise with the opportunity to provide new jobs, professional training and job development, purchase goods and services locally to support the needs of Charlotte County and surrounding communities.

#### **e. Compatibility with Local Plans and Budgets**

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GEO will work closely with local officials in Drakes Branch and Charlotte County to ensure the construction of the facility and its subsequent operation align with the local comprehensive plan. GEO has maintained close contact with the local officials since the previous award of the 1,000 bed medium custody facility in July 1995. Unfortunately, due to the Commonwealth's decrease in bed needs at the time, that project never materialized. However, the Drakes Branch and Charlotte County officials have never wavered in their support of a public-private partnership in their community.